

Cinematic Depiction of Social Issues in the Movie *Slumdog Millionaire* by Danny Boyle

تصوير سينمائي للقضايا الاجتماعية في فيلم المليونير المتشرد لداني بويل

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Abstract:

Cinema has always been a useful visual directive for society as it imparts solid attaches to its social realities by a decent depiction of its products and shortcomings. This is what *Slumdog Millionaire* is about, where the one can see the various themes explored, and the narrative techniques used to deliver a moral message on regardless of how things exasperate, there is always the spark light of hope, with a touch of help from destiny, to triumph over the protagonist Jamal's wretched beginnings in Mumbai's squalid slums and the poor conditions he lived in. Through a narrative analysis, this movie tried to provide a motivating, and insightful representation of the social issues surrounding the poor people of India living in the Indian slums, by using a remarkable mixture of fantasy and reality that managed to stay the audience entertained, and aware of the serious situation that the impoverished people are living in. As a cinematic portrayal of India's urban poverty, this social problem film is perhaps one of the foremost celebrated movies in recent times eliciting critical reactions on the real life in India.

Keywords: Cinema; Social Issues; *Slumdog Millionaire*; Real India; Social Problem Movie.

ملخص:

لطالما كانت السينما توجيهًا مرثيًا مفيدًا للمجتمع لأنها تضيء ارتباطًا وثيقًا بالواقع الاجتماعي من خلال التصوير اللائق لمنتجاتها وأوجه القصور فيها. هذا ما يدور حوله المليونير المتشرد ، حيث يمكن للمرء أن يرى الموضوعات المختلفة التي تم استكشافها ، وتقنيات السرد المستخدمة لإيصال أخلاقية بغض النظر عن مدى سخط الأمور ، فهناك دائمًا ضوء أمل ، مع لمسة مساعدة من القدر ، للانتصار على البدايات البائسة لبطل الرواية جمال في الأحياء الفقيرة القدرة في مومباي والظروف السيئة التي عاش فيها. من خلال تحليل سردي ،

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حاول هذا الفيلم تقديم تمثيل محفز وثاقب للقضايا الاجتماعية المحيطة بالفقراء في الهند الذين يعيشون في العشوائيات الهندية ، باستخدام مزيج رائع من الخيال والواقع الذي نجح في إبقاء الجمهور مستمتعًا ومدركًا للوضع الخطير الذي يعيشه الفقراء. كصورة سينمائية للفقر الحضري في الهند ، ربما يكون فيلم المشكلة الاجتماعية هذا أحد أهم الأفلام المشهورة في الآونة الأخيرة التي تثير ردود فعل انتقادية حول الحياة الواقعية في الهند.

كلمات مفتاحية: السينما ، القضايا الاجتماعية ، المليونير المتشرد ، الهند الحقيقية ، فيلم اجتماعي.

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Introduction:

Cinema has the ability to project a society as good or bad, it may eventually lead people to either trust or distrust the society and learn from the stories it narrates. As movies are an integral part of people's lives, they mirror what they believe in, what their flaws are; strengths, concerns, and attitudes, then try to decipher them from their daily interactions (Morris, 2020).

This research paper focuses more on the sociological themes, by talking about human struggles and how they are constrained by social patterns and issues they face as individuals of a society, affecting mostly the Indians which are portrayed in the movie *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) which is one of the most popular movies in India and the world directed by Dany Boyle, dialogues and pictures were written by Simon Beaufoy, and was produced by Fox Searchlight Pictures and Warner Bros. The storyline for this film is predominantly based on Vikas Swarup's novel *Q & A*, and it got several awards; about eight Academy Awards; most notably Hollywood's highest accolade, the Oscar for Best Picture, and it received a statewide release in Mumbai, and the United States after its global premiere at International Film Festivals.

Slumdog Millionaire is a film about friendship, devotion, love, infidelity, and hope, that describes a young poor man who becomes a millionaire after taking part in an Indian television reality show, through experiencing discrimination and injustice in his life along with oppression, prejudices, and the distinctions between poor and rich people noticed in his society, he answered correctly and won the big prize. The movie is served as a brilliant entertainment for mirroring human life and as an authentic representation of the lives of India's urban poor.

In addition to a description of Indian history, *Slumdog Millionaire* is a film that contains many moral messages based on events from real life. Even though some stories are made up, they have a real-life link to people since the events depicted happened at some point and in

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some way. Like Jamal the hero of the story who faced many choices in his life, but kept searching for its meaning through unusual experiences that are unique, and that taught him a lot more than education. When talking about the structure of the narrative, the noticeable thing is that every scene is coursing with energy, color and, emotion reflecting above all else, pure life, and above all there is this mixture of drama and comedy and thriller to some points, to make it an exhilarating ride to predict the incidents happening in India whether they are real, or it is an exaggeration in relating a living story from the orient by a western lens. Yet, this work as a social problem film remains a fiction which many critics argued about, some praised it and others denied its authenticity.

The Perception of the cinema by the Indian audience and the Western audience is a reflection of the power that cinema as a medium has in terms of representing a society. Hence, for the Indian audience, it has managed to represent the reality that exists in their society, while it has developed empathy for the impoverished in India among the Western viewers. Indian culture has vastly diverse customs and beliefs than other regions of the world; however, the moral fabric of people is universal, that what *Slumdog Millionaire* as a spectacular fiction is about. This is a kind of "symbolic interactionism" i.e., as the story is more about the characters and their stories, and how they connect. Through this powerful tool of advocacy which is cinema. (Hall, 2007).

Overall, this film pays respect to Bollywood by incorporating many of its customs, such as fast-paced editing, brilliant colors, a fairy-tale love story, and a feel-good musical dance ending. This attracted Hollywood's attention that often has used international styles and filmmakers to its advantage and by embracing European, and Indian moviemakers, *Slumdog Millionaire* is an international production for the global collaboration between film industries.

1. Cinema and Society:

Movies were always a reflection of society and a medium for disseminating moving images and narrating a story based on either reality or fiction, and precisely the film industry is one of the most influential sectors of the present time that can transform the audience's opinions, and helps them to connect more closely with the moment. Cinema has proven to be a beautiful and powerful source of pleasure and delight; it affects people's conduct in a positive way, as well as a good depiction of real-life events in society.

To focus more on the research point, there are many correlations between movie and society, but also exist some conflicts and competitions that can be built from a cultural, social, religious, and economic background, that's what *Slumdog Millionaire* deals with, it describes the distinct aspects and issues taken from the everyday life of the real Indian society. Movies are significant sociological and cultural documents that shape the understanding of the past and present. By combining social reality and romantic drama in one movie, it deserves to be called a social problem film which is a story that weaves a wider social crisis into the personal conflicts of its protagonists, i.e. the genre of fictionalized depictions of social crises set in realistic settings (Horne, 2016).As is the case with all the social movies which brings light to discuss the plight of the poor, the deprival homeless, and those affected by war's

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stigmatization, and awaken the sense of empathy and responsibility to realize the message conveyed visually through this cultural door, that is considered also a good teacher for all people around the globe.

To this extent cinema succeeded to portray many social pictures by focusing on the evils of society as, unemployment, casteism, crime, addiction, harassment of women, and terrorism, etc., and on the other corner, it is a medium of communication as cinemas began to operate as a unifying force for cultures since they were able to break down barriers such as gender, caste, class, age, and literacy levels, allowing for their multipurpose position in society (Kothari & Raheja, 2004, p.13) .This emerged as a capturing living image to present social cases and to address these social problems; cinema allowed the film industry to use a screenplay and a written storyline that are often an adaptation from literary works like it is the case with the targeted research. Which aimed to be not only a mere copy of the literature, but rather a unique usage of characteristics and techniques that can be motivational enough for the audience to enjoy, and either allowing them to laugh or cry for its incidents. In this film, the explored genre incorporates social insight and dramatic conflict into a cohesive narrative structure. As a result, films can be used to both illuminate and explain major societal concerns and themes, as well as the logic of representations.

That's clearly what the movie *Slumdog Millionaire* is all about; an adaptation from a social book called *Q&A* and which gives the viewer an impression of reality somehow more powerful and life-like to interact with. Chidananda Dasgupta (2018), a Bengali director, notes that “when it comes to cinematic adaptations of literature, certain characters and occurrences may change, but the very composition of the elements, the molecular structure if you like, will undergo a transmutation.”(Kidwai, 2018, para.9), because it is the script, dialogues, and the screenplay that is constructed to develop a film once it is in production.

Moreover, the existence of media and its need for independence to play a proactive role in the creation of society has been emphasized by social researchers through numerous ideas (Thompson & Sharma, 1998),this is what the Indian cinema along with its American counterpart dealt with. Such film industries shed light on continuous social problems that plagued society, through a process of reality flavored with a bit of fantasy to create the cinematic atmosphere, afterward it is just a genre of art that should focus on imagination, creativity, and identification, as well as acting as a source of information and representation ,and a resource for identifying social and individual realities of society (Couldry, 2000), and this proved that acting is also considered a fundamental impetus for mirroring factual events occurring in real life, like what happened to the children of *Slumdog Millionaire* and the hurdles they faced make the viewer believes in the visual situation.

It is known globally that the mainstream films in India or more precisely Bollywood industry which is based in Mumbai, increased the number of producing Hindi movies that deal with reality and provide good content for its viewers, by adopting some conventions from the other Western film industry Hollywood, as dramatic social films targeting social justice

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and democracy, and examining social issues such as corruption, poverty, and the widening urban-rural split (Mishra, 2002).

As a result, academics contend that the portrayal of fantasy takes precedence in Indian cinema, although the limitations of cinematic representation imposed by society are also visible in cinema (Chaudhuri, 2005). This would also allow cinema to educate, break social barriers and highlight the evils prevalent in society. Many of the elements that have come to define the social problem film revolve around the nation's perceived awareness of a social issue and how that issue is integrated into a narrative structure.

This is what cinema is capable of creating a fusion of fantasy and reality and developing hope and inspiration through the belief that society can remain standing. It deals with social issues and tries to explore their causes and consequences. It plays a vital role in the shaping of views and impressions regarding a society's social situations as a medium. In *Slumdog Millionaire's* case, it is just an emblematic representation of a real 'world' attached with fiction, but it is problematic in explaining the social plagues of poverty and violence within a melodramatic genre, which is ordinary in India and to understand the role of cinema in the given context. In addition, films in India are known to shape popular culture as the fans there idolizes movie stars and try to imitate them, so basically the film has given more effectively informed about the culture and society in India and shaped the audience's connection to the story on a personal level as if they are in the shoes of these actors. As the approaches contribute in conveying a film's message and eliciting emotional responses from viewers.

The last point one can refer to is that movies are stories, about people who come out with ideas from the experiences they lived and try to capture and display messages of social reform to the public, thus, the film has proven to be a more effective medium. Cinema as a visual art helps in educating the audience about various facts regarding society and stimulates different perceptions, feelings, and atmosphere which bring beauty to this noble relationship between society and cinema, between people and the big screen.

2. Plot Summary:

Slumdog Millionaire is a film set in the Mumbai slums, namely in the Dharavi neighborhood, which is one of the world's largest slums. It follows the story of Jamal Malik, an eighteen-year-old Indian Muslim orphan who becomes a millionaire after winning a jackpot in the popular Indian version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* Jamal, a former street child is a protagonist, and the film depicts his quest to rise to the top. Various Indian socioeconomic factors are depicted in the film at various moments.

Jamal, who has no formal education and works as a tea waiter at a call center, is on the verge of winning a whopping twenty million rupees in the show presented by Prem Kumar. He gives precise answers to the questions and raises suspicion of cheating, so he was tortured by the police officers brutally. When he was interrogated, Jamal recounts the hard incidents from his life experience in a form of flashbacks, and that every chapter he experienced guided him to the correct answer which proved his innocence.

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These flashbacks tell the story of Jamal, and his brother Salim from their childhood and how they lost their mother in the Bombay riots between Muslims and Hindus, afterwards they flee and meet Latika a girl from the slum who became his crush and the third musketeer as referred to the novel *The Three Musketeers*, but they were found by a gangster named Maman who trained the children by blinding them to become effective street beggars, so they escaped leaving Latika who was recaptured.

Over the years, Salim and Jamal have made a living by selling products on top of trains, and posing as tour guides at the Taj Mahal. Jamal eventually insists on returning to Mumbai to locate Latika. Maman has raised Latika to be a prostitute, which they find. After killing him, Salim became a gangster with another crime lord Javed, and Jamal as a tea server in a call center, but again fails to find Latika.

Because he knows Latika watches *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* On a regular basis, he auditions for the popular game show, in a final attempt to meet her again. Despite the harsh attitude of the show's host, Prem Kumar, he makes it to the final question. Kumar and the police, on the other hand, believe it is for a mere "slumdog" to know the answers to so many complicated questions, however, they found that he has plausible stories and let him free. Simultaneously, Salim helped the girl to flee, and asked for forgiveness because he betrayed Jamal and separate them, but Javed learns that Salim was instrumental in Latika's escape. Salim assassinates Javed, and then he was assassinated by Javed's men.

The name of the third musketeer in *The Three Musketeers* is Jamal's final query, which he never learned. Jamal dials Salim's number using his "Phone-A-Friend" lifeline. Latika manages to answer the phone in time, but she is unable to provide a response and informs Jamal that she is safe. The final question was posed by the host, and he correctly predicted the name of the Musketeer from the four options (Aramis), winning the big prize. Jamal and Latika reunite at the train station, confident that they will not be separated again. The film concludes with the couple doing an itemized Bollywood dance to the song "Jai Ho," which means "Be victorious".

Figure N° 1. Slumdog Millionaire Movie Poster (2008).



3. Structure of the Narrative:

The movie *Slumdog Millionaire* proved to be a good case study of research for its distinct traits, as being a hybrid festival film that made critics nationally and globally change their reception and connect to its structure such as: the strangeness of its title, the uniqueness of its plot, the perfection of presenting its characterization, the accurate setting, and above all the creative cinematography, that gathered all to provide a moral lesson and reflect human life.

Starting with the plot which shows some aspects of causality; each scene in the movie has a cause-effect relationship to tell what would happen next, it is a kind of reverse episodic narrative like how experiences in Jamal's life is woven with probable occurrences that made him a millionaire. Danny Boyle uses a complex non-linear narrative structure of flashbacks to tell his story, Jamal's childhood and youth, as well as those of his brother Salim and his lover Latika experiences and trials, were all documented, as were the quiz show sessions that took place prior to the police probe who accused him of fraud. The use of these flashbacks as a memory explained how the hero was able to answer all the difficult quizzes in the game show and managed to win twenty million rupees. The director demonstrates how a person's values and behaviors may produce contrast and affect their life via conversation, camera shots and angles, and character's actions.

Furthermore, the combination of scriptwriting and staging creates the most soaring slice of romantic uplift found on film, when Jamal uses his Phone-a-Friend lifeline during the show's climax. Even Boyle's Bollywood-inspired song-and-dance routine during the final credits feels natural and appropriate due to the sequence of incidents and its cinematic structure.

When a novel is turned into a film, much of the original structure is often lost. When Danny Boyle and Simon Beaufoy adapted Vikas Swarup's novel *Q&A* into *Slumdog Millionaire*, they kept the ambitious narrative approach of the original text and merged the two timelines into a single tale. Given the non-linearity of the timeline, the game show acts as a frame story, anchoring the plot with a creative and compelling backbone, which allows the audience to examine these crucial moments in Jamal's history and present this as what can the point of view stands for.

Moving on to talk about the genre of *Slumdog Millionaire*, which is more of a hybrid genre rather than just one, but overall the film would be classified as a romantic drama, as it has a large influence from Bollywood, Social Realism, and the use of the Picaresque which is a film genre that highlights the various misfortunes of a hero, usually from a lower socioeconomic level, who eventually prevails over a corrupt society by utilizing his wits. The romance between Jamal and Latika is the pounding heart that drives the action forward and gives our characters hope when all is lost, and when the film draws to a close where the two are safely reunited and their destiny together finally realized, it made the reception more fluid and multi-dimensional to complement the intentional meaning of film analysis.

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The presence of a song and dance composition in the film helps it relate more to the Indian style of narration, as well as the languages used by the host in the show to greet the audience as a portrayal of the distinct social structure. While foregrounding poverty and a gritty slum-based gangster life, the film remixes fragments of Indian popular cinema in ways that can be unsettling, to throw light on the tragic life of the children. In addition to realism as a valued artistic category seems to have more in common with the tastes and cultural beliefs of the middle classes than with those of national groups and Indian cinema in particular, through its collaboration with Hollywood that succeeded to some extent to unveil the cover over a serious matter; a social case which can turn to be a global one and not only applicable on the Indian society and its various communities.

To keep the tale moving and fascinating, the filmmaker builds strong primary characters. To begin with, the film's protagonist, **Jamal Malik**, is a tea server who decides to enter the *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* Competition to locate his long-lost love, Latika. He represents a life's endeavor to understand how the impoverished survive, as well as the brutality they face, which evolved into mysterious experiences that helped him achieve success by maintaining optimism. Jamal has a quiet confidence and a sense of his own destiny, and this calm faith is what leads him to victory ultimately.

Latika; Jamal's love interest, is a young girl who is lost in the underworld after being sold into prostitution at an early age by a begging ring. She has spent most of her life being abused and neglected, and only her bond with Jamal has kept her going. Despite the torture she has received, she has a pure heart and a love for Jamal.

Salim; Jamal's brother, is exceedingly self-serving and determined to get power and fortune through any means possible. He takes up a revolver at a young age and kills Maman, a gangster, and from then on, he becomes a gangster himself. Salim and Jamal had a tumultuous relationship, with Salim betraying him on several occasions. In the end, he atones for his mistakes by sacrificing himself to save Latika.

Thus, the casting of a film hero who is also an Indian by birth and ethnicity, as well as other Indian performers, allows moviegoers to connect more easily, as these three characters have succeeded in evoking emotion in the viewers and pique their interest in the film. In addition to the villain roles presented by **Maman, Javed** as gangsters and crime barons, and exclusively the devious show's host **Prem Kumar**. The characterization of that movie may give the real portrait of the society, as it illustrates the conflict between those who live in the most difficult circumstances but remain honest and just, and others who dwell in luxury but become greedy and selfish.

Overall, this film can be seen as a work of classic romantic drama films where you get to know the main character's personality and that who is in a constant state of jeopardy, and that makes it a typical narrative with a few twists and turns.

The movie is filled with many themes that enhanced the viewer to relate to the story and its core moral message.

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Love: *Slumdog Millionaire* is, at its core, a love story; it is the relationship between Jamal and Latika that is the film's pulsing heartbeat, the spark of hope that shines through when all else fails. The hero, Jamal, spends much of the film battling for his life in tough conditions, and his unwavering loyalty to his childhood sweetheart Latika, is what motivates him to survive and fight for his life.

Society and Class: India is the world's second-most populous country and a rising economic powerhouse. However, it still suffers from extreme poverty while simultaneously being home to enormous wealth. Jamal's narrative exemplifies the strength and vitality of the countries' impoverished, who find ways to survive and, even thrive in the most difficult conditions and the face of terrible suffering by having hope to accomplish greatness. In reality, *Slumdog Millionaire* is but a fairy tale, because it would be impossible for Jamal to leave poverty unless if it is luck by chance.

Fate and Free Will: In *Slumdog Millionaire*, fate plays a significant role; Jamal feels it is the guiding force in his life. In his heart, he feels that his fate will take him back to Latika and a future with her. Jamal's destiny was to win 20 million rupees, and he succeeded in finding his loved one and realizing this fate, propelled by his great conviction. So, basically, 'It's written'; this line appears several times throughout the film to rationalize a slumdog's success on a competitive trivia game show. By the end, it appears like fate has played a role in Jamal's trip, though he has multiple choices, he insisted on one choice and destiny gives him the answers.

Perseverance: Jamal's tenacity in the face of unimaginable adversity cannot be overstated. He believes wholeheartedly in his mission to find Latika and will do whatever it takes to succeed in reuniting with her, and this was guided by his relentless devotion to this quest and faced an extremely dangerous world just to be with her.

Knowledge as Experience: The entire story is set up to reveal Jamal's past experiences from which he gained the knowledge he employs to answer the quiz questions. Many characters in the film underestimate Jamal's uncanny ability to know the answers to all of these questions, but he wins the game show. The film demonstrated that education is not the only way to knowledge, but it may also lead to unexpected wisdom.

Friendship: Alexandre Dumas' novel *The Three Musketeers*, about a loyal gang of musketeers who battle for the common good, is a constant reference in the film. Jamal, Salim, and Latika recognize themselves as characters in this novel, although knowing nothing about it, and consider themselves as the three musketeers, which they have accepted as part of their identity and an emblem of their childhood connection. When the last question on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* Stands between Jamal and limitless wealth, the novel returns to haunt him. With an instinctive guess, he was able to get the answer correct.

Redemption: Flashbacks to when the brothers were children indicate a tight familial tie between Jamal and Salim, but it also becomes evident that the brothers took two very divergent ethical courses as a result of their struggles. While Jamal has a strong moral center,

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Salim enjoys gangster life, becomes increasingly involved in shady transactions, and does not always play by the rules, such as when he steals Latika from Jamal and begins working for Javed. By the end of the movie, however, just when it appears as Salim has fully embraced the evil side, he decides to help Latika, and sacrifice himself for her well-being, which serves as a form of redemption and recognition of his righteousness.

In addition to other major themes like; fortune and sibling rivalry, survival and a dystopian society, morality, honesty and responsibility, poverty, violence, and religious discrimination, which are prevalent in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, and also universal in all cultural societies.

Figure N° 2. Jamal in the Public Toilet Pit



Source: <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/slumdog-millionaire-2008>

Figure N° 3. Children in the Slums



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/575334921124436960/>

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Slumdog Millionaire's setting is undeniable; India is nearly a character in the plot. The hectic pace and brilliant hues are all very Indian, as the film takes place entirely in Mumbai, where we see both extremes: a modernizing megacity with wealthy elites and desperate squalor in the Dharavi slums, and, more crucially, the game-show's setting because it establishes the tension between Jamal Malik and Prem Kumar, which is one of the hurdles Jamal must conquer in order to discover love. The Bombay riots of 1993, in which Hindu and Muslim communities clashed in the streets of Mumbai, killing Jamal's mother and forcing the boys to escape the city, are also mentioned. It is so interesting to notice the different types of settings used and which makes the story more entertaining. It is a Hollywood movie, but the setting of the movie is in India, so it can be a new trend to mix some different movie cultures in one movie.

The director employs a variety of techniques to distinguish his narrative's various time zones, while also seamlessly connecting them to a unified whole. His use of color and movement is one method; he distinguishes the present from the several pasts. There is almost any space between history and present, or even the future because the film frequently leaps back and forth between them. They are so closely linked that they may almost be said to be happening at the same moment, as a suffusion of immediacy. The sound was also employed to separate different narrative strands, such as the quiz show, police station, and childhood recollections, all of which were used to connect the various scenes.

The legendary end of *Slumdog Millionaire* is nothing if not memorable. Sure, it seems out of nowhere; one moment, Jamal and Latika are experiencing a delicate moment of calm in an empty train station after they have been safely reunited, and the next, they are leading a vast swarm of riotous Bollywood dances to the tune of Oscar-winning song "Jai Ho." Some have panned the ending, calling it a jarring departure from the calm softness of the final moment and a shameless attempt to manufacture a commercial feel-good conclusion. Others laud this segment for its ability to portray the joyful atmosphere and effervescence of Mumbai's city and culture, along with the glamour of Bollywood blockbusters. As the film nears its conclusion, the cuts become faster and faster, and the music accompanying Jamal and Latika's segments becomes the same, hinting at their impending reunion. Not only are Jamal and Latika nearing the end of their journey, but the viewer is as well.

So, with its positive and inspirational themes, a dark but ultimately optimistic storyline, exotic scenes, dazzling visuals, a sensational musical score, and exhilarating Bollywood-style choreography, this low-budget Indie product has easily captured the hearts of audiences and critics alike while also stirring in a romance. *Slumdog Millionaire* never stops sprinting, and it is a personal victory.

4. Major Social Issues Raised in Slumdog Millionaire:

There are some important social issues represented in this film, and which reinforce somehow racial hierarchies that exist in both India and the West. Although these representations shed light on poverty and exploitation in Indian society, they fail to realistically address other social problems like violence against the weak and slavery of

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children, and also a bad environment of slums, but they tried to identify these problems to avoid enlarging them, all these are the core of this research article.

4.1. Child Violence

It is one of the many psychological and physical issues that children face and can have a significant impact on their lives. It has detrimental consequences in their lives that will follow them until they reach adulthood. Children who are subjected to violence develop despair, a diminished sense of self-esteem and self-worth, and engage in risky conduct as a result of a variety of stressors such as social stress and family. By presenting a glimpse of inequality and child trafficking, this film raised awareness about such issues.

4.2. Social Stratification Depending on Gender:

Women endure mistreatment in their society based on their gender; they are most definitely more abused and treated unfairly than males. Violence against children is not the only horrible deed mentioned in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*. As women are believed to be merely things and a man's property. This discrimination can be seen in Latika's life, where she was forced to work in a brothel and entertain men who came to see her by dancing, which is a form of prostitution. Because they do not have to suffer as much as women, men have things much easier, and even if achieving social mobility is tough, it is easier for men than it is for women.

4.3. Slums in the Movie:

Dharavi, a slum in Mumbai that was the setting for the critically acclaimed film *Slumdog Millionaire*, is Asia's largest slum, with nearly a million people living in one square mile. It is a successful enterprise as well as a haven for individuals of many faiths. The genuine slumdogs showcase real Dharavi locals who live, work, and are glad to call the slum their home. The "slum" in India is depicted as a harsh environment where individuals fight for existence while dealing with powerful criminal lords and corruption. In the past, the "slums" were referred to as an "informal neighborhood" where people lived and worked. Even in modern times, there are no official infrastructures; people live in homes that are unfit for human habitation. The difficulties of life begin early in the slum, but there is still time and space for friendship and goodwill (Gehlawat, 2013, p.195). Despite the fact that the children in the film are not wicked, they have no choice but to pickpockets and steal to survive. This type of crime is the least dangerous, as they only commit minor offenses. People who live there come from all over the world, speak different languages and belong to various castes and creeds, yet their identity is one, that of slum-dwellers, and their concerns are all the same. Though in the west they would view it as bad conditions for the children to live in such bad environment that is full of dirt, poverty and privation, and corruption, as the slums which the film focused on and explored by the talented actors to make it a thriving spotlight.

Ghezzal Sihem, Frid Daoudi
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Figure N° 4. Dharavi, Mumbai, one of Asia's Largest Slums.



Source: <https://www.gpsmycity.com/attractions/dharavi-23017.html>

4.4. Poverty:

It is a major cause of social problems and contributes to their spread. Many teenagers in India and other developing nations do not attend high school because it is either far away or too expensive. In addition, children's illnesses are neglected, and their abilities are hampered at a young age. One important point to remember is that one's poverty is easier to bear if one's children's future appears somehow bright. Poor areas have a lot of talent, but it needs to be connected to greater opportunities. Despite all the buzz, the film *Slumdog Millionaire* sends a clear message; it provides a highly disempowering story about the poor that utterly undermines them.

Poverty is immediately apparent in the film's opening scene, when Jamal, his brother Salim, and their companions flee the police after being caught illegally playing cricket on a landing strip. This implies that this is a common occurrence in the lives of children living in slums and that poverty and crime are linked. Similarly, this scenario might be interpreted as an examination of people's attitudes toward poor children; the cops exhibit no sympathy for them and have no consideration for their age. They are dressed in filthy clothes and have no shoes, demonstrating their minimal financial resources and their disregard for material possessions.

As a result, one of the ways the film depicts poverty is that it is difficult for children, who live quite different lives than children in Western societies. The children leave the slums only to end up as abused child laborers in the orphanage they thought would be their safe haven. The only option for 'slumdogs' to get out of poverty appears to be by a miracle or death; Jamal only became wealthy through the chance of winning a game show, and Salim escaped poverty through his sacrificial death. This portrays poverty in India as a permanent state that cannot be readily escaped and can never be overcome.

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4.5. Casteism:

Slumdog Millionaire is not generally regarded as a testament to the Indian caste system, but its filmmakers attempted to cover some hints of it. For example, Jamal Malik could very well be a Dalit Muslim, but rather than his caste influencing his life outcomes, it is his economic situation that is seen to influence how he pursues through life. Due to the caste system, there is a stark disparity between the affluent and poor in Mumbai, in particular, and other big Indian cities in general, which is depicted in the film perfectly.

Jamal and other young children like Latika and Salim beg and steal for money, or are pushed into slavery and even child prostitution because Dalits are regarded outside of Caste. This inspired them to fantasize about leaping over the enormous chasm into a life of wealth and glory in the higher caste. When Jamal gets his opportunity on “*Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*”, the host and public both laugh in his face when he reveals his profession. This is another case of prejudice based on caste. After Jamal begins successfully answering questions, the show's host gets suspicious of how a "slumdog" or Dalit could have acquired such information. It has a shallowness and unreality about it that may offer entertainment value but does little to motivate people to fight caste. This is a good example of the social class divide. For a long time, there has been a divide between classes, with one group living in luxury and the other living in poverty. The many languages spoken, geography, invasions, religious differences, practices, and ethnicities were all factors. This caused a rift between people, making some people much less wealthy than others (Mohanty, 2005, p.59). These forms of discrimination have an impact on the acts, behaviors, and relationships that all people of India's society engage in.

4.6. Religion:

In addition to the ethnic violence conflagration, the film hints at the deep spirituality associated with Indian culture. The social struggle depicted in the film between Muslims and Hindus in India, the riot in which Jamal's mother was murdered and many other people from rural and slums were massacred, is a strong reference to religion. The film demonstrates that Hindus have more influence than Muslims.

So, in this film, the social problems encountered by the characters are found to be caused by social stratification, moral degradation of the slums in society, and the impacts of crime, violence, and discrimination adding to the plight of slum dwellers, which are all viewed as basic problems in the society, and this remains a central fact of Indian life in this film, and which the director Danny Boyle effectively demonstrates within his characters.

5. Exaggeration in Depicting the Real India:

The portrayal of the Indian society was the core focus of the Hollywood movie *Slumdog Millionaire*, and this raised a hot debate over the accurateness of its narrative to represent India cinematically from a Western lens, as is the case also with the Indian scholars.

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While reality played out in the background, Jamal's rags-to-riches story took center stage. He won because he was able to use his slum experience to help him rise beyond it, as shown in this story. Unfortunately, for the real slumdogs of India, that story is practically hard to tell, as it is a theatrical event, and its message is ultimately based on imaginary assumptions. Basically, when a film about India directed by a Western director receives critical acclaim in the West, two related phenomena appear to occur: the film brings out and serves up the worst stereotypes about the country, and how the country has been portrayed in popular culture.

The portrayal of India in Indian and Western cinema has always been a contentious topic. Slum-dwellers, street children as beggars, prostitutes and gangsters, poverty, and degradation were all depicted on screen as a series of socioeconomic portrayals of a country as a whole. As *Slumdog Millionaire* is about these spicy aspects of Indian society and its deplorable conditions, one indelible scene shows a child leaping into the public toilet pit and emerging coated in human excrement. There has virtually been a glorification of the worst features of India's culture and society in some of these images of India seen through foreign eyes, as well as a negative connotation for a polluted India.

However, this film is a fantastic narrative, with a fascinating plot that tries to reveal a side of actual India, such as corrupt police officers, who are a common occurrence across the country and utilize extreme torture during investigations. Extreme poverty does exist, but it is more prevalent in slums like Dharavi, which is home to a large number of people and which the film depicts as a feral wasteland with little evidence of order, full of beggars who round up abandoned children and mutilate or blind them to make them more sympathetic. One may witness the real-life horrors that a youngster from these slums might face, such as religious violence, child abuse, and so on. However, portrayals of Dharavi settlers as "slumdogs" have taken on a more serious tone in India, which has long been sensitive to depictions of its lower socioeconomic classes and the stark struggles that people face, particularly when the term "Slumdog" was used, which did not sit well with a large number of people in India and around the world.

Some scholars have argued that the slum may be more than a place of extreme deprivation, injustice, and violence; it can also be a place of communal spirit, resilience, ingenuity, and resistance. Dharavi is a center of entrepreneurial activity in industries such as garment manufacture, embroidery, ceramics, leather, plastics, and food processing, and it brims with vibrancy and inventiveness. Saumitra Jha, for example, claimed that slums like those depicted in the popular film *Slumdog Millionaire* are complex communities with residents of various income levels, sometimes complex relations between ethnic groups, and political patronage systems, and that unfortunately, some grisly events, such as ethnic violence and the maiming of children to make more money, occur (Murphy, 2009). That is not only the bright side that exists but also the evil one for such a big city as Mumbai.

Many in India's urban elite are outraged at the public display of their country's less glitzy side. They have every right to be proud of what their country has accomplished in the last two decades, but aestheticizing poverty again by a western director displayed the worst sides of

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the Indian society based on stereotypical assumptions. Many Indians see their country's glitz through plush cars, swanky apartment blocks, high-tech TV studios, its rising economy, and colorful cinema, but it is a fact that those born poor tend to remain poor, regardless of how smart or hardworking they may be.

Despite what the main character of the movie Jamal Malik might represent, he was just lucky and succeeds as a result of a combination of genius, hard effort, and sheer luck, but what about the other children? Are they destined to suffer and face life's challenges at such a young age just because some are fortunate and others are not? This is what happens in real India; many who grew up in slums are sentenced to less prosperous lives and are forced to turn to crime or begging on the streets of Mumbai. But the fundamental issue with *Slumdog Millionaire* is not its portrayal of India as just another Third World country, nor its shallow and entirely impressionistic depiction of poverty inside it. The underlying issue with the film is that it greatly undervalues the abilities, and even the basic humanity of individuals it so eloquently proclaims to represent.

Nonetheless, *Slumdog Millionaire* is a film with a conveniently fluid sense of reality, as most of the best shots in the scenario are inspired by a well-documented reality, to help spread a human message in which many cooperative societies and organizations work together with grassroots associations to provide residents with basic healthcare, education, and waste disposal, as well as tackling difficult topics including child abuse and assault against women. Along with the plain reality that, despite their abject poverty, these communities have valuable lives, warmth, kindness, and resourcefulness that extends solely within their society.

This is what *Slumdog Millionaire* stands for; it was criticized for spreading a false realism and a misleading image of India when it was viewed as a Western film, and those who accused it of being "poor porn" or attempted to criticize its filmmakers must realize that it is a fictional work. Salman Rushdie, a British-Indian author, expressed his distaste for the film, calling it romantic and ultimately "banal fluff," and criticizing its director, adding, "He had never been to India and knew nothing about it; so he felt this project was a perfect opportunity"(Rushdie, 2009). It may give a Western audience the impression that they now know a little more about India and its poverty problems, or its culture through a conventional Bollywood style film, which portrays this escapist life negatively, and this would reinforce the old stereotypes about India's dirt, poverty, and worse, and does not show modern India with its economic successes and reverse brain-drain shining side.

Not far from the fetch, *Slumdog Millionaire* indicates that India is doing better than ever only when compared to its awful history. Its exciting story attempted to bridge these two Indias by cutting between a world of poverty and luxury through the Indian version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* In its unique city of dreams, Mumbai nurtured global attention to its abject poverty, as well as its vibrancy and prowess, via this hybrid film. Hopefully, this will result in increased tourists and exposure for the country's film industry. Despite the fact that its surface is encrusted with classic clichés and stereotypical trends that reflect the old

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guard of the Orient-West binary, the gap between India's rhetoric and reality has remained stark.

6. Reception and Critics Views:

Since its premiere, the phenomenal movie *Slumdog Millionaire* made a huge success at the box office throughout the world, and the headlines of newspapers and magazines have been fuzzed with echoes, some of which were pleasant and some of which were very harsh. The reception from movie critics outside India has been overwhelmingly positive, with many claiming that the film provides more genre options due to its blended tale of English and Indian characters. Other contradictory opinions came from Western and some Indian diasporic news outlets, who saw that the film's storyline was flawed.

Furthermore, a few renowned filmmakers, including Amir Khan and legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan, have been critical of the film, citing the fact that several elements of the film are comparable to films created by Indian filmmakers in the past that have not achieved equal attention. According to Bachchan, "It's just that the *Slumdog Millionaire* concept, which was written by an Indian and developed and produced by a Westerner, receives creative Globe acclaim. The other, on the other hand, might not." (BBC, 2009). Nonetheless, he complimented the work of A.R. Rahman, who had received three Oscar nominations, and described it as "amazing," adding that he was proud to be an "Indian." (The Times of India, 2009).

Apart from that, there was a lot of backlash against the film, with critics claiming that six unknown children were cast as children and teenagers in the film, and there was a lot of discussion about how the experience of being in the hugely successful film affected the children's live show earnings because they were still poor. According to the London Daily Telegraph, Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail (youngest Salim) was paid £1,700 and Rubina Ali (youngest Latika) was paid £500 for their efforts on the film. Both of the kid performers remained to live in improvised shacks in the illegal slums of Bandra, a Mumbai suburb after the movie was completed (Nelson, D. &Henderson, B., 2009).

Of course, the film's producers refuted this, stating that the claims were spread by Indian tabloids. Authorities quickly declared that Azharuddin and Rubina would be given "free dwellings," allowing them to leave the Mumbai slum of Garib Nagar (Nelson, D. &Henderson, B., 2009). Even the filmmakers stated that they had hired local social workers to assist the children's families with the transition, that they had established trust funds for the young stars and paid for their educations, and that they had arranged temporary housing for them and their families until the current controversies passed.

An article was written by a correspondent in the Seoul Times on the film's "demeaning portrayal of India and declared that Poverty is celebrated, destitution, squalor, beggar mafia and prostitution stare at us from the frames – magnified to distortion, glorified silly and used as tools of titillation to please the smug white world. He concludes that "only India can do [the Bollywood genre] right". (Bhaskaran, 2010). The film has been also subject to serious

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academic criticism like Professor Mitu Sengupta who raises severe issues regarding both the authenticity of the film's portrayal of urban poverty in India, and whether the film will aid those campaigning for the poor. She contends that the film's "reductive perspective" of such slums will likely promote negative opinions against individuals who live there. It is also stated that the film honors persons and locations that are representative of Western culture and development paradigms (Sengupta, 2010, pp. 599–616).

In response, Boyle and his team stated that they wanted to introduce Western audiences to India's slums to depict the liveliness and community in order to counteract some of the more traditional representations of poverty-stricken slum dwellers seen in advertisements and documentaries. They did not intend to communicate any message that would offend Indians' national pride by portraying India's beauty and its largest metropolis, Mumbai, in a misleading light.

On the other hand, all of *Slumdog Millionaire's* positive reviews are accurate, and many critics and scholars acknowledged that it is an extraordinarily good picture that, despite looking to be very Indian in viewpoint with a Hollywoodian touch, is entirely accessible to Western audiences. When it was launched, it took the world by storm in a way that many of its producers had not anticipated, and as a result, it fared extremely well commercially and critically. According to Gokulsing and Dissanayake (2004), the popular film continues to endorse a conservative moral cosmos in terms of cultural norms and social institutions (p.148). Many are summoned to vouch for the work's legitimacy and defend it against any criticism from their peers, hailing it as a cinematic "milestone."

Another acknowledgment came to praise the work saying that "this modern-day 'rags-to-rajah' fable earned the audience award at the Toronto International Film Festival earlier this year, and it's easy to see why," writes Ann Hornaday of The Washington Post. *Slumdog Millionaire* plays like Charles Dickens for the twenty-first century, with its timely setting of a rapidly globalizing India and, more specifically, the country's own version of the *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* TV show, combined with timeless melodrama and a hardworking orphan who withstands all manner of setbacks (Hornaday, 2008). So, in a very dramatic and exciting representation of Indian life, this fragmentary movie was played magnificently with all these visually stimulating photos that make you interested in the center of the hero's life and learn all what he went through to obtain the prize and his love. One can see an emotional power and distinct cinematic potential in the story, and it was clear that the film's filmmakers had met the challenge of reshaping the novel into a fast-paced tale of intrigue and enchantment. It's just another one of those stories that will make you laugh, cry, and gasp.

To cap everything off, *Slumdog Millionaire* is a visual masterpiece, as Boyle and his team throw together scenes and colors as if he is an artist throwing paint cans at a wall. It is one of those miraculous entertainments that achieves its immediate goals and keeps climbing toward a higher summit. With such an engaging picture, the events in the film induce feelings of suspense and entertainment making it a source of novelty that reveals something new to a Western audience, and raises awareness of India's impoverished regions while also educating

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them about life in such locations .A few film industry insiders and several Indian reviewers recognized Boyle's cinematic achievement; the director wants to say through his motion picture that everyone has equal rights and equal opportunity to choose their own way for success and happiness.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, one can say that *Slumdog Millionaire* depicts a wide range of issues facing Indian society. The image of Indian society, as asserted and described earlier, has been captured as the true and real-life of Indian people in an attempt to enable the viewer to relate to a fictional scenario. Nevertheless, the film's reflection shows a bad image of Indian society through a story about slum dwellers that have been told in a way that foreign audiences have found to be both distinctive and engaging, as well as tragic. It did, however, entice critics and viewers to rave about its well-deserved worldwide triumph as a cinematic masterpiece. As it serves as an excellent illustration of how a film portrayed in a society should adhere to that society's restrictions, culture, and customs, and aids to portray in the awareness of social issues. Cinema has the potential to break down cultural barriers, by using pictures and symbols to introduce societal values and elements.

Slumdog Millionaire's continued presence appeals to the audience for such films that provide a social message and awareness on serious issues that can affect any society in the world, and within a Bollywoodian ending style flavored with Western cinematic ingredients, the film ceased to attract a large audience, and celebrate an acknowledged culture, by narrating the story of a man who overcame incredible odds to achieve his goal and establish a hopeful future, and by mirroring a visual journey to learn about Indian society and culture, through a cinematic depiction that can add to the touristic repertoire and be a good destination for other filmmakers to come and discover the location that might be interesting for their upcoming film productions.

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